Nothing Here Is Vegetarian

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/11298312.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Abigail Hobbs, Beverly Katz
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Different First Meeting, Hannibal owns an up market food truck, Will works in an animal shelter, ex-psychiatrist Hannibal, ex-cop Will, Cannibalism, (at least heavily implied), Murder, Fluff, AU Murder Husbands
Language:	English
Series:	Part 13 of Tiger's Hannigram AU fics
Stats:	Published: 2017-06-25 Words: 2,483 Chapters: 1/1

Nothing Here Is Vegetarian

by TigerPrawn

Summary

Prompt - Hannibal is the owner/operator of an upscale food truck. This high tech mobile chef's dream has all the bells and whistles including extra cold storage built in under the floor. People flock all during the day from 11 - 5 to eat his delicious cuisine. Will, who works down the street doesn't see what all the hype is about until one day he decides to give Hannibal's food a try. Will doesn't think he has ever tasted anything as good in his whole life. Hannibal, of course, gets one look at Will, and does all he can to try and entice the man to come back for another taste. Let's just hope the people of Baltimore don't discover Hannibal's secret ingredient to his yummy food.

“What is *that* smell?” Will screwed up his face as Bev dropped into the passenger seat.

“Lunch. You wanna try some?” she replied, brandishing the sort of bag common with street vendors, if somewhat more… fancy.

He turned the radio to a classic rock station and threw the map onto Bev’s lap. They were always the go to pair for any call outs at the animal shelter - and this one was something he’d never looked forward to: reports of a neglected dog, they’d likely have to call the police to attend once they got there.

“It stinks.” Will replied and pulled away from the curb. “Crack the window.”

Bev had been getting her lunch from that fancy food truck for the last couple of weeks and Will just didn’t get what all the hype was about. Sure, it actually did smell damn delicious and was making his stomach growl. But he knew if he said that two things would happen. Firstly, Bev would get all up at him and laugh that he was into pretentious food after all - which really wasn’t true. It was all so much hipster bullshit as far as Will was concerned. Secondly, Bev would insist on treating him to lunch there, knowing he wouldn’t spend his own money on something so frivolous. Not with seven hungry mouths to feed at home. And he wasn’t about to let Bev do that.

But then, the call out had been terrible. The dog was barely alive when they got there - abandoned in a lock up. Once they got back to the shelter Will turned in the paperwork and walked out. He needed to clear his head and get distance from it. He would ask how the vet got on when once he returned, he wasn’t prepared to handle likely bad news right then.

His walk took him up the strip of the small and bustling seaside town. It was gone 4pm and yet there was still a massive queue by the food truck Bev kept on about.

Will hadn’t paid much attention to it before but now he could see it was a *damn* expensive truck, likely all the fanciest equipment inside - even looked like it had under the floor cold storage. This was a serious foody at work and it certainly wasn’t like any street vendor he’d been to before. The gleaming white of the truck was emblazoned with the word “Carnivore” and tag line “nothing here is vegetarian”. That actually quirked Will’s lips. With the local tourist trade and appeal to the local college, a lot of places seemed to be leaning more

towards organic, vegetarian, vegan, menus *free* of various ingredients. Will had nothing against them, but he was a man who enjoyed his meat.

He looked up as he passed. The vendor was a striking looking man, ridiculously smartly dressed for someone selling food on the street. A young woman, perhaps his daughter, was not as smartly dressed but they wore matching aprons. The man handed down a neatly wrapped package to a customer and looked up as he straightened, catching Will's eye. They looked at each other for a moment and Will felt a little flutter at the intensity of the gaze and the gentleness of the smile that followed. Will found his own lips quirking into a returning smile before he looked away.

Will carried on walking feeling a little brighter on this dismal day.

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Will thought nothing of of the shared smile until he was leaving work a few days later. It had been a long day, but good. Having worked in the canine unit for many years before retiring from the police force, Will was in charge of working with the dogs that needed to be retrained for rehoming. His success rate was great, and he enjoyed the work. It was enough to get by, keep him and his own dogs in kibble and it didn't come with the stresses of the force. Nor the confliction. Will had quit the first time he had shot a perp dead and enjoyed it. But then the guy had just killed his wife and attempted to kill his kid… some people deserved…

No! He couldn't let himself think that way.

He focused on the sidewalk and by the time he looked up he was coming up to the truck. No queue this time, it was closing time. The young woman was cleaning the counter and the man was on the sidewalk breaking down the little sign they placed there when open.

"Good evening." The rich and accented voice rumbled as Will tried to pass unseen.

He clenched his jaw in an attempt to hide the wince that pulled at him. He wasn't good with people, never had been, and being on the force hadn't helped that one bit. Likely why he ended up working with the dogs.

"Hey." Will replied and was about to keep walking when the man continued.

"I believe you are Ms Katz's colleague at the shelter?" The man asked. Will grit his teeth until he thought they might shatter. His discomfort must have been obvious. "Oh, I'm sorry. It's just we see you around and… well, frankly you are the only non-vegetarian that works there who hasn't tried our goods yet… I assume you are carnivorous?"

Will looked up then, his mouth suddenly dry at the gaze that met his. It was playful and teasing, but with an edge of something more… adult. Will swallowed.

"Oh my god, dad please!" The girl was suddenly walking around him and taking the sign from the man's hands. She turned to Will. "I'm sorry, my dad has absolutely no idea how flirting works. It's embarrassing."

Will wanted to smile, wanted to grimace, wanted to frown. And so his face remained completely impassive as the girl smiled at him. It wasn't like he was any good at flirting either…

The girl's smile suddenly dropped, she frowned and cocked her head and all but squinted at him. "Of-officer Graham?"

And then her face was swimming in front of his eyes. A much younger face, covered in blood. His eyes flicked to the stylish scarf around her neck which he knew hid a scar.

"Abigail Hobbs?"

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Will's blood ran cold at the thought of seeing Abigail again. He had managed to make his excuses but not quick enough to avoid her inviting him to dine with them sometime, so they could catch up. How could he refuse? What right did he have? He had killed her father.

He'd enjoyed it.

He shook the thought from his head as he walked up to the nice house in the classy neighbourhood… with a food truck parked on the driveway. He knocked and adjusted his tie - pretty sure he hadn't worn one since he was last in dress uniform.

Abigail opened the door and the smell of delicious food wafted out as she did so.

"Officer Graham." She seemed so happy to see him and that struck a pain through him. She was an orphan because he hadn't been able to help her mother and had killed her father.

"Please, call me Will." He managed to reply on autopilot as she ushered him into the house and took the wine he was holding. The wine he had likely misjudged from the look of this place. He'd been told it was a nice wine, but it wasn't exactly high end.

"Dad, Will's here." She called ahead of them and lead Will into the kitchen.

Hannibal Lecter, as the man had introduced himself on the sidewalk, looked as he always did in the truck. Amazingly neat and tidy for someone prepping and cooking food - shirt sleeves revealing muscles toned from the more strenuous of kitchen work.

"Mr Graham. A pleasure." He smiled. "Please excuse me for not shaking hands." he held up his soiled hands. Blood from the meat he was preparing coated them and made Will's heart skip a beat for a moment. There was something breathtaking about the image.

"Will, please." He repeated for Lecter's benefit, glad the words didn't squeak out.

This was so ridiculous. He should have declined politely.

"Abigail, would you show Will through to the dining room, I'll just be a moment."

The whole place was lavish. This was not the home of someone who operated a food truck. Will couldn't help but feel a little intimated before dismissing the thought. It wasn't like he was there on a date! He was going to have a nice dinner, try not to feel too weirded out about dining with the daughter of the man he killed, and then that would be it. He could easily avoid the truck in future too if he really wanted to. The thought was chased by an image of Lecter's smile.

Dinner was amazing and Will sort of hated that. Hannibal, who had also insisted on first names, had prepared a selection of the sort of things he made in the truck. This was not street food as he knew it, and he heard Bev's voice in his head saying 'I told you so'

Will ate as much as was polite, despite wanting to gorge on some of it. Hannibal had made a fuss over the wine - red being an excellent choice for the meat he was serving. Abigail had held court. This was for her after all.

It was Abigail who explained that she had ended up in a hospital to recover mentally from the ordeal as much as physically. Hannibal had been a consultant brought in because he had dealt with murder survivors before, and they had become close. When the time came for her to leave and be put into care, or maybe a foster home, Hannibal had put himself forward. A year later he had officially adopted her, given up his private practice in order to care for her and started instead to make money in catering.

Hannibal had chimed in then to explain his enjoyment of cooking and that he had thrown himself into all the more after leaving his role as a surgeon. He had transferred his passion for anatomy into the culinary arts. And damn, he had said it with such charm that Will felt his face flush.

Hannibal had asked more about Will then, his job, his interests. It was nice, easy. And it took Will quite sometime before he realised Abigail hadn't returned after she had excused herself to take some plates to the kitchen. They had talked for hours it turned out.

When Hannibal walked him to the door Will had half expected a kiss goodnight, his face flushing at the thought before he said goodbye and left hurriedly.

*

"Oh damn!" Bev was grinning at him. "Do you know how many people would stomp your corpse to get a meal cooked by that man?!"

Will rolled his eyes. "Please Bev. I knew I shouldn't have told you."

"Will, I'm your only friend, of course you had to tell me. So… when are you seeing him again?"

"What? No, it wasn't… I don't even know if he's into guys."

She cocked a brow at him. "The man cooked you an exquisite meal and then time lost all meaning as you talked and talked… these are your words by the way."

“Actually, you’re paraphrasing-”

“Whatever. Will, please… go ask the guy for a date.”

Will rolled his eyes and walked off. He had to get to work anyway, not that he could focus with thoughts of Hannibal Lecter curling around his brain.

Two dates and some lunchtime flirtations at the food truck later and Will was dangerously smitten. He never normally liked to let people this close, but there was something about the man… and his food. At first he thought it would be awkward because of Abigail, but actually she seemed to be very invested in them getting together, almost more so than Bev - who insisted he needed to get laid and made lots of meat jokes where at all possible.

There was an undeniable connection which on the surface made no sense. They seemed worlds apart, but then it turned out that they had both known pain and loss and hunger. The experiences that had shaped their childhoods had been relatable, and had made them the men they were. As they discovered those things about each other the connection deepened.

Yeah, Will was smitten and just about ready to kiss the guy.

He wasn’t sure how it *hadn’t* happened yet. Sure he was useless at this sort of thing, but Hannibal seemed so confident and was flirtatious to the point that Will often felt a stirring in his loins.

Maybe tonight? He had thought, had anticipated and desired. Right up until they had a late call out and he knew he was going to have to cancel his date. Hannibal was great about it, said that he did have something else that he could attend to that evening which would then free him up on the Friday night if that suited Will.

*

“Hannibal?” Will looked up and heard his heart pounding in his ears. They both stilled and stared at each other. “This… this was the *something else*?”

“Indeed.” Hannibal’s tone was calm but his lips started to twitch into a smile. The man was wearing a plastic suit over his usual clothes, and carried what looked like an old medical bag.

Will laughed and stood up from the corpse he had been attempting to dismember, covered in blood and viscera and half naked from the necessity of it.

They stood looking at each other under the moon that lit the large and isolated garden attached the to dilapidated house that had been the source of Will’s earlier call out. A notorious asshole who Will had visited previously, before finally taking his dog into the shelter earlier that day malnourished and with a broken leg. One time too many. Like the others, like the ones before him - a modest number winding all the way back to Garrett Jacob Hobbs.

“An exceptionally rude man. Ms Katz told me what had happened as she collected her dinner on her way home this evening. And… well, Abigail and I do believe that whenever feasible,

one should always try to eat the rude. Don't you agree?"

Will cocked his head, realising the meaning before looking down at the man he had been butchering in order to dispose of the body. So practical, this once doctor. Disposing of the body was always the tricky part, almost as tricky as food truck's finding good priced meat suppliers. He looked back up at Hannibal and grinned.

"Absolutely."

He stepped over the corpse and pressed his lips to Hannibal's. A few drops of blood mixed between them as Hannibal opened to him.

It was definitely the kiss he had been waiting for.

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